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Committee on Housing and Land Management

Seventy-ninth session
Geneva, 4 and 5 October 2018
Item 2(a) of the provisional agenda
Review and implementation of the programme of work 2018-2019
Review and follow-up to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda, the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing and other relevant agreements

Proposals for changing the name of the Committee and updating its areas of work

Note by the Bureau of the Committee

Summary

At its seventy-eighth session, the Committee requested the Bureau to formulate proposals along with a rationale for changing the name of the Committee to ensure that the name accurately reflects its activities in relation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda and other relevant agreements. The Committee invited the Bureau to prepare its proposals for a decision at the Committee's seventy-ninth session. This document presents the results of deliberations by the Bureau at its meetings in April and July 2018.

The Committee is invited to endorse the proposals and forward the name change proposal to the ECE Commission Session in 2019 for adoption.

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I. History of the Committee

1. The Committee is the only intergovernmental body that deals with housing, urban development and land management for the entire ECE region, which is home to one fifth of the world's population. The Committee was established in 1947 to provide support to governments in the post-war reconstruction of the housing stock in Europe. There was a need to rebuild quickly buildings, including housing, and this required establishing common building standards and exchanging best practices in the construction. Against this background, after the establishment of the Economic Commission for Europe as a UN body with an original mandate to assist the reconstruction and economic development of Europe, the Panel on Housing Problems was established in July 1947, which was tasked by member States to deal with housing issues. The Panel was specifically requested to "study housing problems of common interest to European countries and advise the Commission on means, technical and economic, of assisting, and expediting housing problems of member countries" and "collect, analyse and disseminate statistical and other information".

2. In 1948, the Panel's scope of work expanded to deal with problems related to construction materials and the provision of a centralized statistical service for locating available materials. To give it a "better defined place within the Commission to carry on its important tasks", the Panel was transformed into a Housing Sub-committee under the Committee on Industry and Materials.

3. The Housing Sub-committee eventually became a fully independent committee in March 1951, and was named the Housing Committee. The succeeding years saw the evolution of the Committee's name to Housing, Building and Planning in 1963 and Human Settlements in 1992 to reflect the changing concerns of governments and the integration of social, environmental, and financial dimensions of housing, urban development, and land administration and management in its work.

4. In 1990s, the scope of work of the Committee extended to include urban planning and land use. In February 1996, the Meeting of Officials on Land Administration (MOLA) was established to deal with these additional tasks. In recognition of its work in the promotion of land privatization and land registration in the UNECE region and the need for such work to continue, MOLA was granted a standing character by the Commission in August 1999 and became the Working Party on Land Administration (Working Party) under the Committee on Housing and Land Management.

5. In 2000 and 2006, the 56 UNECE member States articulated and affirmed their vision for the role of the Committee and the scope of its activities. The 2000 Ministerial meeting on Human Settlements reviewed and appraised the implementation of the Habitat Agenda in the ECE region as a contribution to the 2001 special session of the General Assembly, Istanbul +5. As an outcome, the Ministers and Heads of States adopted the UNECE Strategy for a Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the 21st Century, which is based on the provisions of the Habitat Agenda and Agenda 21, with particular emphasis on issues of common interest and concern for all countries of the UNECE region. The strategy outlined the goal of the Committee "*to promote the sustainable development of human settlements in the UNECE region while fostering economic and social prosperity and supporting democratic governance*".

6. The 2006 Ministerial Declaration on Social and Economic Challenges in Distressed Urban Areas validated the strategy's goals and challenges. Following the adoption of the 2006 Ministerial Declaration, along with the 2000 Strategy, which provided guidance to the Committee's work, the Committee was renamed in 2006 the Committee on Housing and Land Management.

7. In 2013, at the Ministerial Meeting the Committee adopted the Strategy for Sustainable Housing and Land Management in the ECE Region for the Period 2014-2020.[1] The Committee's mandate, as reconfirmed by the Ministerial Meeting, is "*to promote the sustainable development of human settlements in the ECE region while fostering economic and social prosperity and supporting democratic governance*"[2]. Its mission is to improve housing and land management throughout the ECE region in a sustainable manner, in particular, by providing practical solutions and guidelines.

8. Since 2013, the Committee has further broadened its activities to tackle better the emerging challenges in the region on which the housing, urban and land sectors have an impact and vice versa, such as: environmental sustainability; real estate market stability; informal settlements; energy efficiency; urbanization; etc. These changes in the content of the work of the Committee were implemented to reflect the adoption of global and regional agreements relevant to the mandate of the Committee.

II. Role of the Committee in 2018: Implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda and other key global and regional agreements

9. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, the adoption of the New Urban Agenda in 2016 and of other key international agreements established new policy frameworks for future activities of the Committee on sustainable housing and urban development within the Committee's mandate. Above all, an integrated and coordinated approach to the global, regional, national, subnational and sub-regional levels, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, is required for meeting the commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda and others.

10. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The United Nations General Assembly adopted in September 2015 the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". It represents an ambitious, transformative global framework for sustainable social, economic and environmental development with the primary commitment of "not leaving anyone behind". Achieving the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals is highly dependent on the joint efforts by governments and stakeholders working at national, global, regional and local levels, including especially private sector, civil society and local communities. The 2030 Agenda stresses the importance of an integrated approach to addressing diverse challenges and the importance of cooperation between and within countries. Sustainable urban development is the focus of SDG 11 – "Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". Work on achieving SDG 11 is crucial for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, since more than half of the planet's inhabitants live in cities and this continues to grow. It is estimated that up to 70% of the world's population will live in cities by 2030. Further, given the interconnectedness of the SDGs, most of them are directly relevant to the work of the Committee due to the integrated nature of housing and urban development challenges.

11. New Urban Agenda (NUA): The Habitat III Conference in October 2016 was the first of the UN global conferences discussing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Conference approved the NUA, which embodies a major shift in UN policy as it emphasizes the direct link between urbanization and sustainable

[1] http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2013/ece.hbp.2013.3.e.pdf
[2] http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2013/ece.hbp.173.en.pdf

development. The NUA addresses principles for the planning, construction, development, management, and improvement of urban areas along its five main pillars of implementation: national urban policies, urban legislation and regulations, urban planning and design, local economy and municipal finance, and local implementation. The NUA provides more details to the SDG 11, it emphasises the important role of local authorities in achieving urban related goals and promotes territorial approach to the implementation.

12. To support the implementation of the global agreements, including the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda as well as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the New Urban Agenda, Addis-Ababa Framework on Financing for Development, the UN-Habitat Global Housing Strategy, the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing, the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning and others, the Committee has included in its programme of work the development of projects and policy documents promoting sustainable urban development, energy efficiency and adequate housing:

(a) In April 2014, the multi-stakeholder project United Smart Cities was launched. The project addresses major urban issues in medium-sized cities in countries with economies in transition in the UNECE region. After the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development was adopted in 2015, the project also supported achieving the SDGs at the local level. In December 2015, the UNECE/ITU United Smart Sustainable City indicators were endorsed by the Committee;

(b) In April 2015, the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing, which supports countries in ensuring access to decent, adequate, affordable and healthy housing for all, was officially endorsed by UNECE. The Charter is based on four principles: environmental protection, economic effectiveness, social inclusion and participation, and cultural adequacy;

(c) In May 2016, the UNECE and ITU launched the global smart sustainable city initiative United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) in response to SDG 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".

(d) In 2016-2017, the Committee supported the preparation of a regional report for the UNECE region for Habitat III (Habitat III Regional Report). The Report reflected on the trends influencing the cities of the UNECE region in the 20 years since Habitat II. It also estimates the trends for the next two decades and showcases the positive contribution that could be made to the 'essence of a city', and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda;

(e) At its seventy-eighth session in November 2017, the Committee endorsed revised guidelines for the preparation of UNECE Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management, which included guidance on the integration of the SDGs in the Country Profiles. These revised guidelines also explained how the country profiles will review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and its SDGs and other related international commitments; and

(f) At the Ministerial Segment of the same seventy-eighth session in November 2017, Ministers and Heads of Delegations of UNECE member States adopted the Geneva Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development. The Ministerial Declaration reiterates the importance of the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and other agreements for the work of the Committee. It also underlines the need to promote coherence, partnership and cross-sectoral links in implementing the above-mentioned global and regional accords, and recognizes the role of the United Nations Regional Commissions in the regional implementation of, follow-up to, and review of, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda.

13. As the Committee continues its work, it develops guidance documents to support the alignment of its activities with the 2030 Agenda; develops studies and recommendations promoting evidence based policies on specific topics of affordable and energy efficient housing, smart sustainable cities, urban planning and land administration. The Committee is actively involved in the preparations and organisation of the annual Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the ECE Region.

III. Proposal to change the name of the Committee to adequately reflect the nature of its work

14. The Committee's contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achievement of the housing, urban and land-related Sustainable Development Goals cannot be understated. As described above, the content of the work of the Committee thoroughly reflects upon the key United Nations policy documents on housing and urban development. However, the title of the Committee and its areas of work have not changed since 2006. The current title does not adequately reflect the content of the work of the Committee. Hence, the Committee at its seventy-eighth session requested the Bureau to formulate proposals for changing the name of the Committee to ensure the name reflects accurately its activities - related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda and other relevant agreements. The Committee invited the Bureau to prepare its proposals for a decision at the Committee's seventy-ninth session.

15. The Committee Bureau at its meetings on 14 April and 2 July 2018 discussed possible options and proposed to rename the Committee to the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management. According to the Bureau members, this title would reflect adequately the content of the Committee's activities as well as give a higher priority to urban issues received after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda with its SDG 11 and other urban related SDGs; and the New Urban Agenda.

IV. Proposal to update the title of the area of work: Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management

16. The Bureau also recommends that in view of the growing prominence of the work of the Committee on the review and follow-up to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other global and regional agreements, to update the area of work "Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management" to "Review and follow-up to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda, Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing and other relevant agreements". This area of work would include Country Profiles which already serves as an important tool for review of the implementation of the mentioned global and regional agreements at the national level.

17. Finally, the Bureau recommends to the Committee to update the title of its flagship programme Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management to the Country Profiles on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management.